



Holiday Stress: Creating "Peace on Earth" at Family Gatherings!

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Family gatherings are wonderful opportunities to share with those closest to us. But for some, sitting across the Thanksgiving table from a particular relative can be fraught with tension, waiting for the first cross word (or turkey leg) to fly! When a relationship is strained, sometimes we can prepare to create a more positive experience and a more relaxed, comfortable get-together. One way is to think of the event in terms of what it is you can bring to the conversation to make it pleasant. Here are some more ideas:

1. List 3 pleasant ("safe") things you can say to that person without adding tension.
2. Now, list 3 things you absolutely *do not* want to communicate, verbally or facially, in your resolve to keep the peace.
3. Take a minute to visualize when you've felt similar tension with someone. Fourth grade? This morning at breakfast? (Knowing where our buttons are installed can short-circuit their power in tense moments.)
4. Softly closing your eyes, begin to visualize him/her as an infant - soft, open, smiling.
5. Using a TV dial, "grow" them up to toddler size. Imagine them exploring their world in wonder, a bit unsteady. Observe that this person was once that person.
6. Dial up to age 7 ... then gawky 14, etc. Continue through to the present. See them not just as who they are today, but also as how they got this way.
7. Now, picture yourself on one of those amazing days when you feel balanced, confident, loving, whole. Breathe into your image compassion for all that has brought this person into your life at this time.
8. Repeat as needed during the day, and keep breathing!
9. Hang out more with the people with whom you're most comfortable.
10. Look for the moments that are lovely, or funny, and remember: This, too, shall pass...

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